

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH.

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Before me lies the list of subjects suggested to contributors to the EVANGELIST. I select the first as the caption of an article in which I desire to offer five reasons why I am a member of the Brethren church.

2. *God loves her.* We infer this from the Lord's choice. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, not because ye were more in numbers than any other people, but because the Lord loved you." We infer this love from the grace and spirit of God bestowed upon the first standard bearers in the church—Holsinger, Brown, Bashor, Yoder, Spanogle, *et. al.*—to sustain them in performing the Lord's work; from the presence of God with her in the furnace, where he removed so much of the dross and the alloy; and from the fact that the great Master has so frequently placed her in the fire, and still uses the rod of correction. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

2. *She is nearest the truth.* To establish this we have but to glance at her mottoes. Here we may see inscribed as in letters of living light, no human inventions, no innovations, no trappings borrowed from worn out and fickle systems, no unholy compact between truth and error, Christ and the world. But *thus saith the Lord*, for all her teachings, ordinances and laws. Where is there a religious body under the whole heaven that can show more of the divine and less of the human in all that pretains to doctrine, worship, discipline and government?

3. *She has an honorable record.* Soundness in the faith has been a marked feature in her character. Over one hundred years ago her father placed the love of their own lives subservient to the church's interests, and even suffered the loss of all things for her sake. Their record is written in glory, as well as in the hearts and grateful remembrance of their spiritual offspring, who are to-day reaping the abundant harvest, sown in tears, and inheriting the rich legacy bequeathed by those godly men who shall be held in everlasting recollection. The pure teachings, the holy lives, the faithful testimony, the earnest contending, and the uncompromising fidelity of such great and good men, animate the soul and kindle a glow of hallowed enthusiasm in our bosoms.

Equally honorable has been the record of the Brethren church in later years. She has kept herself clear from all entangling alliances and greets the present day uncontaminated with the sins of the period

through which she has passed. She has never quailed before an enemy, much less crouched in the presence of those, however great, self-important and fond of the encomiums of the world they may be, who violate the principles of the Gospel. I consider it no small honor to be associated with such a body; is it not sufficient to kindle in our breasts the holy fire of devotion?

4. *She is set for the defense of the whole system of revealed truth.* And this is not a partial, one-sided nor mutilated Gospel, but the entire revelation of God. She adds nothing, rejects nothing. It is her province to guard peculiarly some of the most important doctrines of our holy christianity. In these days, when defection is so general, she feels especially called to testify against error as well as for truth. It is hers to defend the sanctity of the Gospel ordinances; to vindicate the crown-rights and royal-prerogatives of him who is "the Prince of the Kings of the earth," as well as "The Head over all things to the church;" to insist upon the purity of her members and the sacredness of the worship of Him who is a jealous God. These she has been particularly called to defend. They have formed her great Thermopylae of conflict; and like Leonidas and his three-hundred noble Spartans she is resolved to guard her posts though shrewd, determined and bitter be her adversaries.

5. *A glorious destiny awaits her.* That she is a plant, of Jehovah's setting, few will deny; that she has been a witness for the truth is abundantly evident; that her testimony has been endorsed and vindicated by the hand of God, in providence is a beautiful reality; and that her work is not yet accomplished, nor her mission fulfilled is only too palpable; therefore we conclude that the divine Master will not lay aside the instrument until the end is effected. "And one saith, destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sack cloth." There are those who are making a desperate attempt to silence our churches' testimony. It tortures and torments those who long for innovations, self-adulation and flattering plaudits. This accounts for the bitter animus manifested against her, and, strange to say, the persistent efforts to consummate her overthrow.

Judging from the false views of divine truth which are abroad even among many professing Christians, the tendency to forsake the "old paths" and the struggle in which thousands are involved to lower the institutions of Jesus Christ to a level with the spirit and maxims of the times in which

we live, it is potent that a witnessing remnant is required to cry aloud, and spare not, to lift up the voice like a trumpet, and show the people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. This we believe is the destiny of the Brethren church. She is to raise aloft the Gospel lamp to shed light upon the path of returning wanderers. She is to be an active agent in promoting large reforms in social life. She, like a great crane, little by little is bringing many degenerate bodies to that purer, loftier platform of soundness in the faith and holiness in the worship of God. Though now but the "handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains," the day hastens apace when "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth."

Brother, sister, our holy zeal in the churches' interest should develop itself in earnest prayer and well directed efforts for her success. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." May our moral heroism appear in unswerving attachment to the principles of the Gospel. Now and then we hear of a member of our number, without the suggestion of cause or reason, increasing the roll of those "no longer with us." This is their own dire disgrace. If it was noble in the illustrious Roman to lay hold of the ensign, and rush into the very midst of the enemy during the hottest of the fight, proclaiming to his wavering troops, "Tis here I mean to die," how much more noble for us to stand firm heeding from our very heart of hearts the inspired injunction "watch ye," stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong," and professing from our bosoms, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

"I love thy kingdom Lord,
The house of thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood.

I love thy church O God:
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her psalms of love and praise.

Sure as thy truth shall last,
To Zion shall be given
The brightest glories earth can yield,
And brighter bliss of heaven.

If you want knowledge, you must toil for it; if food, you must toil for it; if pleasure, you must toil for it. Toil is the law. Pleasure comes through toil, and not by self-indulgence and indolence. When one gets to love work, his life is a happy one.